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DISCOVERY OF THE NEST OF THE NOISY SCRUB-BIRD, *ATRICHORNIS CLAMOSUS*

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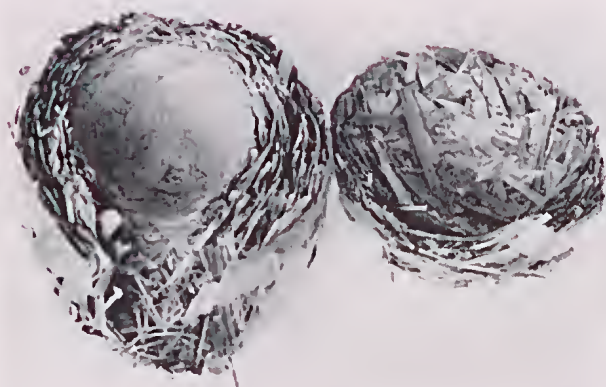
Over the years there has been considerable speculation as to the kind of nest built by the Noisy Scrub-bird (*Atrichornis clamosus*) and two reports have appeared in the literature (reviewed by Chisholm, 1951: 101). The Albany naturalist, William Webb (1895, cited by Whittell (1943: 224)), claimed to have found a nest and eggs at Torbay Inlet but his account has failed to carry weight. Considerable credence was given for some years to a claim that a nest found by A. Y. Hassell east of Albany in 1897 was the nest of the Noisy Scrub-bird. As neither of these nests resembled that of the Rufous Scrub-bird, *A. rufescens*, doubt has been cast on their authenticity (Serventy and Whittell, 1962: 285). Chisholm (*ibid.*) sums up: "Apparently, therefore, the nature of the nest of the western *Atrichia* must remain an open question for the present."

It is easily understood, therefore, that since the rediscovery of the Noisy Scrub-bird on December 17, 1961 (Webster, 1962), much time and effort was spent in the search for a nest, particularly during the period of September to December when the birds were thought to be nesting. Although a good deal was seen of the pair of birds first found, the nest was not located, though the pair did produce one young bird. What appeared to be the foundation of a nest was found by a visitor in another territory but this pair failed to return after his discovery and the nest was never completed. So the presumed nesting period of 1962 passed without any completed nest, old or new, being found.

Then on January 8, 1963, Mr. Erie Sedgwick and his son, Mr. Lindsay Sedgwick, visited me at Two People Bay. That day we made a trip up Mees Valley and down to the coast near Mt. Gardner. After exploring a few hundred yards of the rugged coast to the eastward we returned to the vicinity of our parked land-rover. We then decided to explore a typical gully to the west by travelling up it from about sea-level towards the summit of Mt. Gardner. We made our way through fairly thick scrub, over a small fast-running brook and into a thicket. I was leading and of necessity breaking a trail, when I heard an exclamation from my companions. On turning around I saw Mr. Lindsay Sedgwick, who was immediately behind me, holding a largish globular nest in his hands. This nest had been

resting about eight inches above ground in a clump of *Juncus*, on a rough platform built up of the same material as the nest. I was rather stunned by this unexpected discovery but soon retraced my steps and inserted a finger in the side entrance of the nest.

The special feature of the nest of the Rufous Scrub-bird is a lining of stiff and fairly hard material resembling rough cardboard or the grey papier mache of grocers' egg packages, and I certainly expected to find the same sort of lining in this nest. There was a hard lining, fairly smooth and only on the bottom section of the nest. However this cup-shaped lining is thin and brittle and not nearly as thick as the lining of the nest of the Rufous Scrub-bird illustrated by Chisholm (1951, pl. 15 opposite p. 286).



Cut-away view of nest of the Noisy Scrub-bird referred to in this article; the hard lining of the bottom of the nest is in place.

Later the top was cut from our nest so as to expose the interior. It was found to be very new-looking and unstained. In the accompanying illustration the hard lining may be seen around the bottom of the nest.

The nest was very loosely constructed of the flat leaves of a coastal cut-rush, *Lepidosperma persecans*, and was already shedding pieces everywhere. It was oval in shape and measured 6 x 5½ inches x 6½ inches high, with a side entrance measuring about 1½ inches in diameter. It should be noted that no other materials than those mentioned, namely the cut-rush leaves and the cardboard-like lining, were used in the construction of the nest itself. The fabric of the nest is 1-1½ inches in thickness and its relative size may be appreciated from the illustration. I suggest that the thickness and special lining of the nest were evolved to give protection from predatory small mammals which are numerous in this type of habitat.

This nest was found less than 80 yards from the sea, in a hollow where two gullies enter the sea. The larger of these has been named Sedgwick Gully.

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NOTES ON WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDACEAE

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III. *ELYTHRANTHERA*, A NEW GENUS FOR THE ENAMEL ORCHIDS

HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION

In 1810, Robert Brown described two new species of orchids from Port Jackson, New South Wales, under a new genus, *Glossodia*, namely, *G. major* and *G. minor*. He distinguished these from *Caladenia* thus "Appendix inter labellum et columnam. *Anthera* columnam membranaeaeo dilatatum terminans." (An appendage between the labellum and column. Another terminating the column which bears membranous wings.) He derived the name from Greek words meaning "like a tongue," referring to the appendage, not the labellum—"Appendix linguam serpentis aemulans (unde nomen)." It is coincidental that the name in an anglicized sense is most appropriate to the plants later described from Western Australia, for they are glossy in appearance, while the Eastern ones are not.

The first western species was named *Glossodia brunonis* by Endlicher in 1839. He pointed out that it was an anomalous species on account of the extension of the column above the anther ("propter columnam supra antheram productam"). For this reason he placed it in a new section, *Elythranthera*. The name is derived from the Greek word, *ελυτρον* (elutron), generally used in reference to the protective wing case of coleopterous insects, and the modern Latin word *anthera*, i.e., referring to the protective hood over the anther.

In 1840, Lindley described a second W.A. species, *G. emarginata*, and in 1882 Fitzgerald described a third, *G. intermedia*.

Bentham, in his *Flora Australiensis*, retained Endlicher's section, although he corrupted the name to Eleutheranthera, which means "free" rather than "hooded" anther. The eastern species he placed in the section *Euglossodia* (true *Glossodia*). He was uncertain about this arrangement and wrote that "the two sections might almost be considered as distinct genera." This was also the opinion of Mrs. E. H. Pelloe in *West Australian Orchids* (1930). In this work, which was a collation of material rather than a full revision, she wrote: "the two sections . . . might easily be considered distinct genera."

It is apparent from this brief summary that up to the present no close study has been made of these orchids in their fresh state.